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AUTHOR Ehrhart, Donna J.; Boyd, Charley
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ABSTRACT

In June 1995, New York's Genesee Community College hosted "The Written Text and Human Dialogue," a 4-week faculty development seminar for 30 professors in the humanities and technical disciplines across the United States. The seminar sought to explore the history of human communication and writing, to expand participants' knowledge of writing technology, and to establish bridges between the humanities and technology. At the beginning of the seminar, teams were formed of two faculty members from complementary fields, such as reading and biology, while participants met 5 days a week in morning discussion sessions and afternoon or evening computer lab sessions. In the first week, the history of writing was discussed, particularly the effects of the printing press on communications; in the second, electronic books and electronic pedagogy were reviewed; in the third, participants explored authoring conventions related to hypertext fiction; and in the fourth, discussions were focused on the future directions of hypertext. Participants explored the most current writing technologies, such as electronic mail, and learned how to create their own World Wide Web pages using Storyspace. In an on-site evaluation of the program, participants expressed satisfaction with seminar speakers and facilities and felt that the seminar would improve their teaching, while concerns were expressed regarding the number of computers available and the pairing of faculty in teams. (AJL)

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The Written Text and Human Dialogue: Pedagogical Responses to the Age of Hypertext Media

By

Donna J. Ehrhart and Charley Boyd
Genesee Community College
Batavia, New York

Paper Presented at the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development Conference on Teaching and Leadership Excellence (Austin, TX, May 26-29, 1996).

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Narrative Description

Project Description

The 1995 Summer Institute of Genesee Community College primarily focused on faculty development for thirty professors from across the country (twenty-eight from two-year colleges and two from four-year colleges) representing both humanities and career/technical disciplines.

By April the final selection of participants had been completed, and all the introductory material sent to each participant. Some of the material included a reading list, selected textbooks, travel information, housing and dining information, area maps, and general facility description. Those participants with established E-mail accounts were communicated with by the Project Coordinators, Directors and staff.

Beginning on Monday, June 19, 1995, the participants began their four week seminar-- "The Written Text and Human Dialogue" -- with Dr. Jay David Bolter of Georgia Institute of Technology. At this time each participant was teamed with another participant from a complementary discipline. For example, Kathy Knight, Reading Professor, was teamed with Joan Zummo, Biology professor. This teaming process was maintained throughout Dr. Bolter's and Professor Joyce's portions of the seminar.

During the morning seminars held in standard classrooms and at the Hillside Inn, participants and presenters discussed readings that examined subjects ranging from the

beginning of the written word to pedagogical changes that are continuing to evolve as a result of hypertext, hypermedia, and worldwide web (WWW). Dr. Bolter facilitated the group's exploration of writing spaces, which ranged from the clay tablet to cyberspace. Week One's discussions (History of Writing) also included looking at the effects on thinking processes that derive from oral and written cultures. Particular attention was given to the effects of the printing press on communications. Week Two's discussions (Theory of Electronic Writing; Electronic Pedagogy) studied electronic books, critical theory concerning hypertext, and the role of the electronic author. Dr. Judy Murray discussed new pedagogical possibilities in the electronic age.

Week Three's discussion, (Imag(in)ing Virtual Spaces: Hypertext Poetics) led by Professor Joyce, primarily explored authoring and critical conventions relative to hypertext fiction. Week Four's discussion (Embodying Learning in the Buzz-daze: Hypertext Pedagogy) focused on where hypertext is now and where it may be directed in the future. One of the concerns dealt with pedagogical methodology issues. Leading the discussions on these issues were Dr. Nancy Kaplan and Dr. Stuart Moulthrop.

The morning sessions, which met five days a week, were followed by afternoon and evening sessions conducted in the computer lab. During the first two weeks of these afternoon sessions, participants learned to use Storyspace in order to construct WWW homepages. Each team developed its own page for specific instructional purposes. Some of these teams developed projects with other team participants that mirrored their own discipline. Thus, for example, Charles Bateman, Humanities Professor, and Randy Beller, English Professor, designed a web page to teach developmental writing students. Another

guest presenter, Professor Norman Gayford, facilitated a look at hypertext through DART software. Towards the end of the first week and the beginning of the second week, WWW MOO's were visited. A MOO is a virtual meeting place for communicating among groups of people, with individual voices in cyberspace. Participants at the Genesee Community College site conversed and "virtually" met in cyberspace with another NEH-funded group located in Los Angeles, California. During the final two afternoons of the second week, each team presented its project. When Professor Joyce proceeded to facilitate, the participants, once again in teams, devloped other pedagogically-oriented WWW homepages using Storyspace. The afternoon seminars allowed examination of a variety of CD-ROM software, such as Victory Garden, Afternoon, Myst, Encarta.

Comparison of Accomplishments with Objectives

The objectives proposed in our grant application were as follows:

1. To establish a means by which faculty may explore the history and development of human communication and writing.

2. To explore and expand the knowledge of workshop participants of the latest stage of the writing technology and study its applications to the teaching process.

3. To establish bridges between the humanities and technology/career education faculty, in order to establish communications between both groups in the areas of curriculum development, Writing Across the Curriculum and revising existing courses and curricula in fulfillment of General Educational goals.

The first objective was met.

Primarily through discussions and readings the participants had an opportunity to become thoroughly immersed in the exploration and history of the development of human communication and writing. Approximately five sessions were devoted to this first objective.

Although Professor Eisentstein was unable to present her research on the printing press, Dr. Bolter led two discussions of her work. The development of human communication and writing was demonstrated through hands-on use of computer software and various applications. These computer lab sessions helped participants gain a more insightful understanding of the directions that communication and writing have taken in the age of hypertext and hypermedia.

The second objective was met.

Participants were able to explore and expand their knowledge of the latest stage of writing technology and study its applications to the teaching process through the hands-on approach offered by Netscape, E-mail, MOOs, and Storyspace. These packages allowed participants to enter into the global realm of communications and writing, as well as localized computer communications. From there, participants were able to not only study the applications these forms offered in teaching, but also to develop their own new tools for the real and virtual classrooms. The lab experiences were enhanced by various morning discussions led by Dr. Murray on pedagogy, Dr. Kaplan, on future reading and writing instruction, and Dr.Moulthrop on future pedagogies. In addition, both Dr. Bolter and Professor Joyce led discussions and computer labs on all these issues.

The third objective was met.

Bridges between humanities and technology/career education faculty were built by the initial pairing of faculty from complementary disciplines. Further communications were established naturally throughout the classroom, which created an environment rich in ideas and collegiality. Not only did paired participants develop projects for their classrooms, they

also presented their rough projects to the entire group, which in turn gave lively feedback about their efforts. At the time of this writing many of the participants have shown samples of their course work development that indicate revisions, which include Writing Across the Curriculum modules. An example of this effort can be found in one of the participant's home page, developed by Lawrence Clark, of Tomball College, at the following internet address **http://www.nhmccd.cc.tx.us/people/ljc/3kings/3kings.html.** Other participants have included electronic communications between faculty and students and also between colleges.

Changes in Project Activities

One of the overall changes in the agenda was the increased meeting times from four days to five days per week. Furthermore, several of these days expanded into evening sessions, which sometimes lasted up to four hours. These changes were suggested by Dr. Bolter and Professor Joyce before the start of the Institute.

An unexpected, last minute change occurred when Dr.Eisentein canceled her presentation. As a result Dr. Bolter presented her research.

A third change was in the initial reading list that was included in the original grant proposal. Dr.Bolter and Professor Joyce opted to alter the list before the Institute. The revised list is included in the Appendix. These changes were made to reflect more of the literature textbooks and media available on human communications and current technology.

Finally, one book, due to its unavailability at the time, was excluded from readings. Professor Joyce's book Of Two Minds: Hypertext Pedagogy and Poetics had not gone to print.

Some of the extra activities such as evening sessions in computer labs, and 10:00 pm group critique of the hypermedia story Afternoon were scheduled changes generated and agreed upon by the group.

In addition, several faculty members at Genesee Community College hosted informal get togethers at their homes for the participants.

Continuance

One of the outcomes in the proposed grant indicated that Genesee Community College would establish and maintain an on-going internet E-mail Conference for the participants, as well as NEH officials, administration and faculty of Genesee Community College. Within one week of the close of the conference, a lively E-Mail discussion had already begun, connecting participants at their home sites with Genesee Community College Coordinators of the NEH project, who in turn dispersed E-mail to the NEH distribution list. Although three or four participants do not have E-Mail accounts, the vast majority do, and most have contributed to the on-line discussion. To date more than 200 messages have been forwarded. Samples of these messages range from friendly greetings at the start, to serious instructional conversation.

Many participants have continued developing and revising their projects, while others have started new projects for classes. One example, Carrie Meyers has incorporated the use of Storyspace in her English courses.

Evaluation

Dr. Evelyn Edson of Piedmont Virginia Community College evaluated our project. Dr. Edson visited during the Institute in the last week. She had an opportunity to interview participants one-on-one, as well as partake in the morning discussion sessions and afternoon computer lab sessions. In addition to the on-site interviews she also examined all the GCC evaluations developed by Charley Boyd and Donna Ehrhart. The questionnaires show an overwhelming unanimous satisfaction with the keynote speakers: Dr.Bolter and Dr.Joyce. Participants generally responded well to the guest presenters, Dr. Kaplan, Dr. Moulthrop, and too a lesser degree, Dr. Murray. The facilities and facilitators were generally rated quite favorably by the participants. Participants enjoyed their lodging, meals, and access to the resources and lab facilities. A few respondents felt that more computers were needed; however, most expressed contentment with the lab arrangements. When asked if this Institute will strengthen their teaching and enhance their scholarship, responses were unanimously positive. For example, "The precious gift provided by NEH was the opportunity to be supported and encouraged to grow, stretch, learn, and operate outside usual comfort zone." When asked for responses on the pairings and groupings, a few participants expressed dissatisfaction with the actual pairing, but all of the respondents spoke in glowing terms about the various types of grouping that occurred throughout the institute. For example, "The interaction with others was a key element in this institute. Professional sharing and collegiality was a rich source of learning. Informal pairings and groupings shifted and grew throughout."

Computer Application

The participants' computer skills and knowledge varied from computer illiterate to

computer experts in their field. Through the course of the four weeks, participants were brought to a level of competence to utilize the computers and software available to them. By the end of the seminar, all the participants were adept at using E-Mail, Storyspace, non-linear text, and Netscape. All were able to take advantage of one or more MOOs and CD-ROM technologies. Participants were able to incorporate at least one of these technologies into their classroom instruction, as demonstrated through their projects.

Projects

Participants' projects range from a hypertext gospel for the WWW, to the study of Ebola disease for use in both biology and reading classes, and a writing course on the WWW: Robert Fowler, Hypertext Gospels; Katherine Knight and Joan Zummo, Ebola Saga; Richard Higgason and John Falon, HTML Files for COM III on WWW.

Dissemination

The dissemination of the information related to this Institute has been distributed before, during, and after the seminar. Prior to the participants' arrival, packages of specific details were sent leading up the Summer Institute. The packages included descriptions of the campus community, the Genesee County community, and the western and greater New York region. The campus community portion included reports and presentations to area meetings, recruitment fliers transmitted on paper and electronically, presentations and invitations to the board of trustees of Genesee Community College. The Genesee County community portion included a number of press releases and newspaper articles. The western and greater New York region portion included two appearances on Rochester's national public radio, WXXI, during the Institute and one appearance on a local radio station broadcast from Warsaw, New

York. In addition, a presentation was made to the SUNY Vice-President's Council before the Institute took place. For the future presentations six hours of videotape have been made for the purpose of dissemination. Both audio and videotapes are strong arguments for the effectiveness of this NEH funded Institute. Additionally, participant Jay Howard is drafting an article based on the Institute that he plans to submit to the Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy.